

The August district work period is ending and Congress reconvenes on Tuesday. On Wednesday night, President Obama will address a joint session of Congress on the issue of health insurance reform.

No matter how you feel about the issue, I hope you will watch.

Over the past month, I have listened to a massive variety of opinions on health care:

- I have spent about an hour each day personally calling constituents who contacted me to ask questions or criticize the proposals.
- I invited protesters into an Open House and listened to their views (you can view this session on my website, at <http://israel.house.gov>).
- I met with Long Island leaders of the so-called Tea Party movement.
- I addressed business groups and associations, such as the Commack Rotary Club, on health insurance reform.
- I met with representatives of hospitals and doctors, patient advocacy groups, small businesses, and more.
- I conducted a telephone town hall for senior citizens with more than 5,000 participants.

Some of what I heard is based on...well, let's just say some pretty heated rhetoric. For example, the notion of federal death panels and euthanasia squads that would terminate care to the elderly...or the belief that Americans would be forced out of their existing health insurance plans and into a government-run model. Neither of which is true.

I believe that in his address to Congress, the President should present a clear vision of exactly how health insurance reform will affect the people I represent. Prior to voting on the bill, I will hold a town meeting.

And that town meeting will be based on specific provisions and a much clearer understanding of what is in the bill...and what isn't.

Thus far, I have heard from people who adamantly oppose any health insurance reform and those who adamantly support it. But most people I have encountered this past August would prefer to make a judgment based on what's real and what isn't; how a proposal will impact them and how it won't; what the costs will be in passing a bill, and what the consequences of doing nothing are.

In the meantime, I will say this: I am unalterably opposed to allowing partisan squabbling, obstructionism and fundamental misrepresentations to defeat the stability and security of your

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health care. We must not lose focus on the need to rein in health care costs, which are straining household budgets and strangling small businesses. Over the last decade health care premiums have doubled from \$6,000 to \$12,000. That simply is not sustainable. We have got to deal with health care costs.

Please watch the Joint Session on Wednesday. I will be listening to the President on the Floor of the House...and listening to the wide divergence of views from those who put me there.